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POLAND: Regime Criticism of the Church

The government is increasing its attacks on the Church. Warsaw is close to completing interest payments on its debt in 1981. The Warsaw Pact exercise tentatively planned for next month will be held in Poland.

A radio commentator yesterday criticized "irresponsible action" by some younger priests. He claimed that they have encouraged their parishioners to resist local authorities' efforts to remove crosses from schools and public buildings, "even if shot at." The commentator also indirectly criticized the Pope by reading, and halfheartedly refuting, a letter accusing John Paul II of being a "sworn politician" overcome by hatred of Communism.

Comment: The radio commentary, the second media attack on the Church in five days, apparently is part of an effort by hardliners in the regime to force moderates into a broader dispute with the Church. The hardliners envy the Church's power and prestige, and--with Solidarity out of the way--they may be confident that they can now put the Church in its place.

Premier Jaruzelski and other moderates will resist taking such a course because they realize that it would seriously risk a civil war. They have long counted on the efforts of the Church to maintain calm and know that many in the military are among the faithful.

Attacks on the Church will put increasing pressure on Archbishop Glemp to toughen his position. He will deliver his next major sermon on 26 February, but probably will first take a private reading from party moderates on the regime's intentions.

Progress on Debt Rescheduling

Poland has paid virtually all the interest due to private creditors in 1981.

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[REDACTED]

Comment: Paying off the interest will finally allow Warsaw to sign on 4 March the private debt rescheduling agreement for 1981.

[REDACTED]

Warsaw Pact Exercise

A Warsaw Pact exercise is to be held next month under the direction of the commander of Soviet forces in Poland--

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] further indicated yesterday that Polish military participation may be limited. He claimed that the Poles used their entire 1982 fuel allotment during the long road marches to martial law deployment areas and that many pieces of combat equipment remain in disrepair. [REDACTED] only limited numbers of East German troops will participate--apparently not more than 50 kilometers inside Poland. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] earlier this week also stated that an exercise to be held next month would consist of field training followed by command staff activity. [REDACTED]

Comment: It is not unusual for exercises such as the one described [REDACTED] to be held during March. The early release of information concerning it suggests, however, that the Soviets are taking pains to depict it as nonthreatening. [REDACTED]

Even so, it likely will be interpreted by the Polish people as a signal to submit and by the regime to take a tougher stance. In fact, this probably is the Soviet intent. [REDACTED]

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